

AVALON

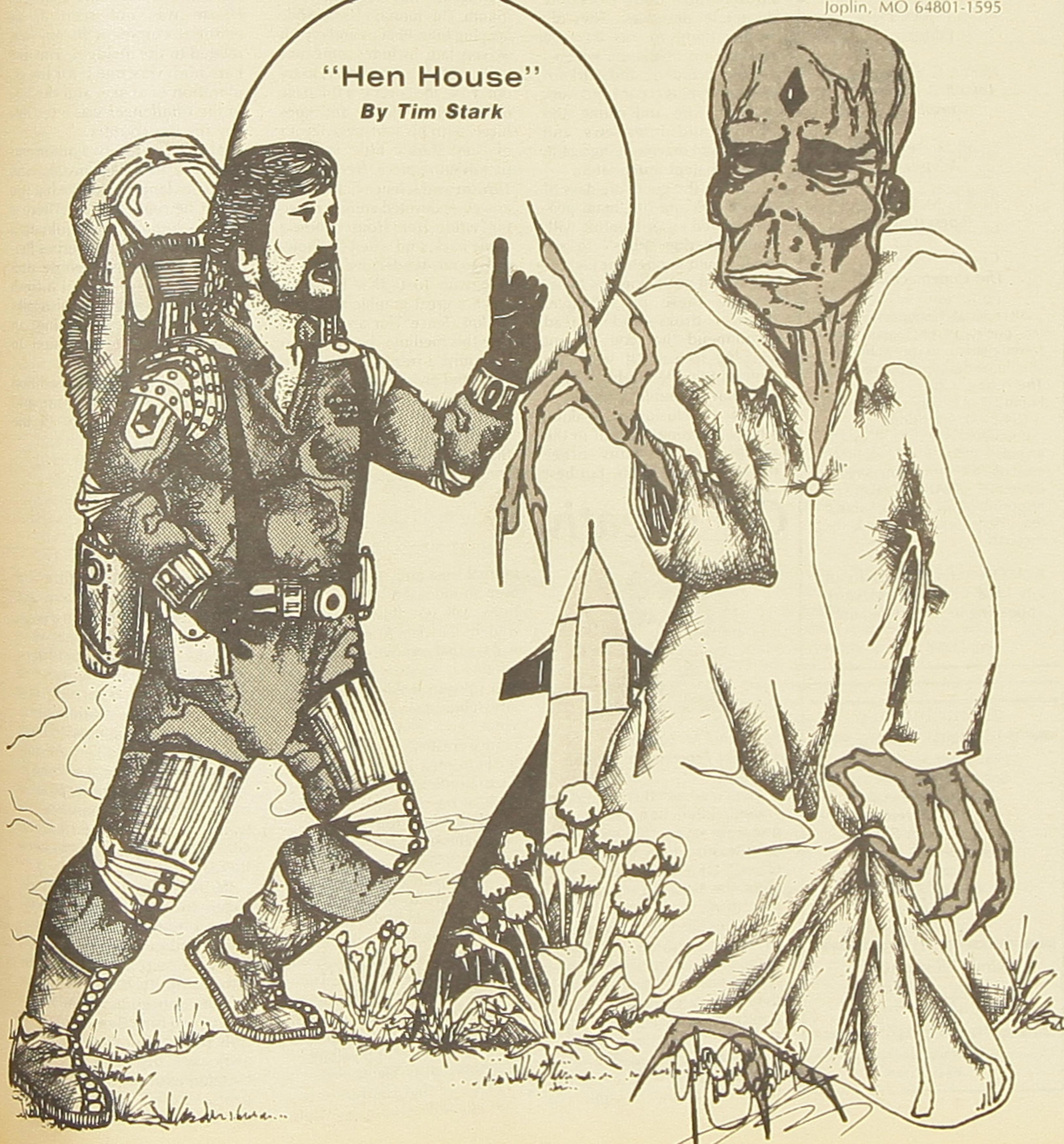


MISSOURI SOUTHERN'S LITERARY MAGAZINE

Missouri Southern State College,
Joplin, MO 64801-1595

"Hen House"

By Tim Stark



AVALON

Missouri Southern's Literary Magazine



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Editor's Notes

By Simon P. McCaffery

Lack of sleep is 'mind altering'

Some strange things happen to you when you don't sleep. You'd be surprised, I think. When you don't sleep, your mind and body become desperate deserters. They do strange things to you. Between working on this issue, which I am very proud of, and work for *The Chart*, plus classes and work and my wife and eating and driving and interviews and writing and maybe eating again, I haven't slept much lately.

Back in the good 'ole days of the late 60's and 70's, many people enjoyed experimenting with "mind-altering drugs" to see what would happen, or just for giggles. Let me be the first to denounce these physiological harmful drugs—and instead recommend that you try not sleeping instead. It will alter your mind quite nicely. You will also have trouble coming to sound conclusions, speaking clearly, dressing yourself in the morning, and many other delightful side effects. But best

of all, you'll have all that extra time to get things done!

This is not a guilt trip. I enjoy very much the opportunity to put together this magazine every month. This month's issue, while keeping John Phillips and myself up very late, includes some new ideas that we were anxious to try out. First, the cover is a full page illustration by John, and goes nicely with his four-page layout of Tim Stark's little science-fiction satire piece, *Hen House*. Tim, an avid science fiction fan, as well as devoted comic collector, wrote *Hen House* quite a while back, and when he showed it to me, we decided (I'm not sure who first) that it would make a great graphic story for *Avalon*. Since Tim and I both love this medium, he agreed to re-writing a fresher draft of the story and giving me some ideas about how it might be drawn. Hopefully, it has worked out fine. Tim did want to mention that the story is not a serious commentary on Man's conquest

of space, or his reasons for exploring it. Since the story was written well before the *Challenger* disaster, we both wanted to make sure that *Hen House* was not seen as an editorial comment in any way related to the incident. Tim and I are both very much for the exploration of space, and the loss of the *Challenger* was a terrible day for the country.

Also inside are two humorous essays by Tom Bartkowiak, who discusses language and what you might be *really* eating. There is also a humorous look at a heavy-metal rock concert by Bertha Wootten-Case, whose unique perspective gives it a fresh angle. Arthur Saltzman also talks about creativity in writing, an area he is quite qualified to speak in.

All in all, I think this edition of *Avalon* is the best so far, and my sincere thanks to all the contributors.

On Creativity



By Arthur M. Saltzman
Assistant Professor of English

"Be creative!" It is a common enough injunction, as though one were saying "Be on time!" or "Be sure to remember the olives!" Or as though one could place the Muse on retainer like an attorney.

Having been asked by *Avalon* to compose a short piece on the ambiguous nature of the creative writing process—itself an assignment like catching rain in your hands—I am initially compelled to issue a broader disclaimer: one cannot teach creativity, but only encourage it, foster it, provide a classroom atmosphere of

mutual trust and attention. But even so modest a set of aspirations will not flush creativity from its dark lair. After all, some will say that creativity cannot be taught; it hobbles handbooks and subverts syllabi. Some talk airily about the soul's own province and contend that to reduce creativity to subject matter is to miss it entirely. Some gaze wonderingly at Tolstoy's desk, or travel to Frost's famous woods to wish it full of the same articulate snow. They may be right.

"Endings are elusive, middles are nowhere to be found, but worst of all is to begin, to begin, to begin," cries the author. "Art never rescued anybody from anything," claims another. Then a third, finding a way of wording his way, chatters happily about his successful "cracking of the perfect, smug egg of possibility." They may all be right.

I can say that glorious intention guarantees nothing, while

dwelling upon the texture and tension of sentences may get somewhere, if only down a page. (And certainly, those pages move with glacial slowness some days, or months. Many writers we most admire wrote letters bursting with frustration over a poem or novel that resisted them like a wilful child.) I can only suggest that you treat writing as a craft; don't wait for inspiration as if it were the noon bus. "I learn by going where I have to go," notes a poet who has been there.

Writers seem particularly eager to create a mythology around their troubled aspirations. And every writer is utterly on his own, his own ear the only posterity he'll ever know and the only audience he'll ever get to love him. Samuel Beckett calls the central paradox of his own work the need to express coupled with the inability to express. "I can't go on, I must go on, I'll go on." Go. On.

So? What The Hell Is It?

and

Foul Language

Essays by Tom Bartkowiak

Being a man of logic, I often ask myself questions about illogical things.

I think it is stupid for a company to print the words "acetaminophen and phenyltoloxamine citrate" on the label of their product. I said to myself, "So? What the hell is it?"

I'm sure several other Americans have asked themselves the same question. Why bother to put it on there if no one is going to know what it is? I then turned to the front of the label to find that it was an "Aspirin-Free Analgesic for Enhanced Relief of Pain."

I looked at the list of ingredients of standard, everyday table salt. I expected the ingredients to be "Sodium Chloride," or just "Salt." There was more to it than I had anticipated, though. It also contains "Sodium Silico Aluminate." Other, more expensive brands of salt contain ingredients like Magnesium Chloride, or something like that. Anyway, what is Sodium Silico Aluminate? Is it just sand that this company picked up at the beach one day and thought would make a nice filler?

The main ingredient in chicken bouillon is salt. There is probably more salt in the bouillon than in the table salt. But the list goes on and on with things like Mono-Sodium Glutamate, Glyceryl Mono-oleate, Propylene Glycol, L-Cystein Hydrochlorides... What the hell is this stuff? The company probably couldn't tell you! They just want you to know what you're buying.

The solid antiperspirant that I use only lists the "Active Ingredient," so I have no idea what else I'm stuffing under my arm. The Active Ingredient is called Aluminum Zirconium Tetrachlorohydrex, more commonly known as clay.

When I picked up a jar of garlic salt, I figured the ingredients were pretty much described in the name: garlic and salt. But when I looked on the label, Tricalcium Phosphate was also listed.

I began to feel defeated. Even the simplest things were contaminated with sand, clay, and whatever that other gar-

In my opinion, a pain pill should be used to cause pain. However, it is accepted, common knowledge that pain pills relieve pain. So to make life a little easier, I refer to these wonders of medicine as pain relievers.

Contains:

SODIUM SILICO ALUMINATE, MONO—SODIUM GLUTAMATE, PROPYLENE GLYCOL, L-CYSTEN HYDRO CHLORIDES, TRICALCIUM PHOSPHATE, ALUMINIUM ZIRCONIUM TETRACHLOROHYDREX.

bage is! I was almost ready to cry when I picked up a box of Baker's Chocolate and the list read "contains nothing but pure chocolate."

I often find myself listening to people talking. I think about what they're saying and not what they actually mean. During a typical conversation, one person might say, "I could have died when he smiled at me!"

All I can picture is people rolling over dead. But I know deep down inside that these are just figures of speech that everyone uses and everyone accepts. However, the literal connotation remains in my mind and it makes me wonder why we use such languages.

Everyone knows that the final round in the playoffs of major league baseball is called the world series. And I have always wondered why? After all, the whole world doesn't participate. The only countries that have a chance to win the world series are the United States and Canada. And Canada is outnumbered 24 to two. I suppose "world series" sounds better than "continental series" so the present term— inaccurate as it is—will have to do.

One day I saw a box labeled "moth balls." I looked at one of them and said "My God! Imagine the size of that moth!" Then my mother explained to me that they are moth repellents and not moth anatomy.

I think my biggest pet peeve is a "hot water heater." If the water was already hot, it wouldn't need to be heated. But it comes out of the ground cold. That is why it needs to be called a cold water heater! Or just a water heater!

While I was in high school, I worked as a busboy. One day I overheard my eight year old nephew tell his friend, "Tom drives a bus for Holiday Inn."

What else could it be?



Rock Concert Furor

On the 14th of February there was a performance by the "Assault Your Ears and Deafen Them" Rock Band led by that maestro of Rock, Hearing Aid Harry. The Band played in the Vandals' Park in Dun Roaming starting at five in the afternoon, thus enabling the Sweethearts' Parade put on by the "Grey Panthers" which began at two, to be over and the members dispersed prior to the gathering of the Rock addicts: and further prevented a confrontation between the thirties, forties, and fifties music adherents and the eighties Rock music advocates.

The opening number, by its sheer volume of noise, sent the starlings on their way an hour earlier--than was their wont--to their night's roost in the South East part of the town. The second piece was a little quieter than the first, but double in length which had the audience bouncing up and down and applauding; clap where you like even if it may be in the wrong place, what did it matter, possibly there is no right place to clap in Rock? Besides the Band couldn't hear you, and with their dark glasses on possibly couldn't see you either, so one was without embarrassment for one could clap where one wished for this was Rock--R.O.C.K. and not Rachmaninov! After an hour the Band had a twenty minute break and into that time-slot poured the Coke, Popcorn, and Peanut vendors jostling for trade with Hearing Aid Harry's back-up staff peddling their Band's records and tapes.

The problem all started because one of the audience could not decide which to buy first, the record "Back Alley Blue Rock" or a Coke and some Popcorn--

By Bertha Wootten-Case

had he bought the record first he was afraid he would drop it while trying to juggle a Coke and a large bag of Popcorn--in the indecision, and due to

"How Could Joe and Art 'flog' the records and tapes when primeval passions had taken over and they were fighting--'How thin,' thought Hearing Aid Harry, 'Is this veneer of civilization. '"

the crush of people somehow the large bag of Popcorn was dropped in passing between the seller and the buyer; the former insisted the latter pay for the Popcorn, the latter said "Not on your life, you dropped it." The situation deteriorated rapidly from then on, the buyer broke the record over the Popcorn vendor's head which act incensed the purveyor of the hallowed music as he felt musical sacrilege had been

committed, so he rocked the offender back on his heels with a sharp right to the jaw. As he staggered back he joggled the arm of a youth in a very snappy Western suit and succeeded in helping

him to put his Coke down his shirt front and not down his throat--already the situation was escalating in the direction which those staunch upholders of law and order have ambivalent views about, for Assault and Battery can give a problem as well as a benefit; the problem was where to put all the offenders until they could be charged, the benefit was the money to be accrued to the city when they were hauled before the Bench and fined.

At this point in time Hearing Aid Harry and his Band appeared back on stage and they realized that they were not the only ones being taken notice of, that an alternative entertainment was on display in the right-hand corner of the Park and had drawn off quite a number of their audience; in fact, many of the audience had turned from being spectators to that of performers, albeit with their fists! Harry and his Band were used to having their audience's undivided and devoted attention. This was too much. How could Joe and Art "flog" the records and tapes when primeval passions had taken over and they were fighting--"How thin," thought Hearing Aid Harry, "Is this veneer of civilization;" and with that he turned up the amplifiers and after ten minutes, only succeeded in blowing the fuses in the main box which was in the Park Superintendent's Office; which in turn tripped other fuses which put the spot lights out, also the street lights in the Park. Sudden darkness brought a cessation of hostilities as one could not see whom one was hitting--in the ensuing quiet the scream of the Police sirens was almost intrusive.



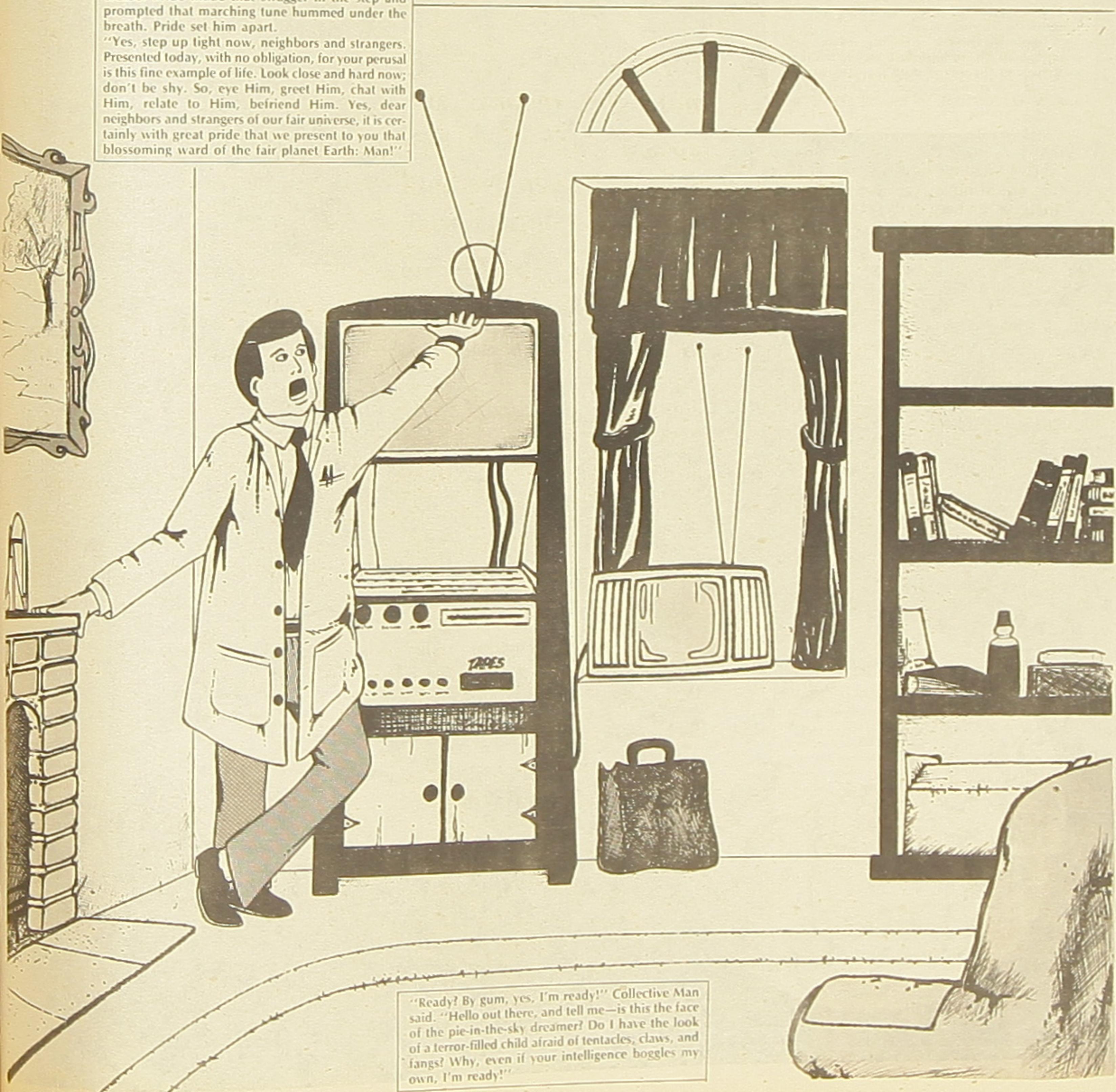
HOEN HOUSE

BY TOM STARK

5

Pride was the whole thing. Pride sparked out of those clear, piercing eyes. Pride was what threw out the chest, drew back the shoulders, held high the chin. Pride bristled in each precisely groomed hair, and pride swathed air with each razor-starched crease. Pride made that swagger in the step and prompted that marching tune hummed under the breath. Pride set him apart.

"Yes, step up tight now, neighbors and strangers. Presented today, with no obligation, for your perusal is this fine example of life. Look close and hard now; don't be shy. So, eye Him, greet Him, chat with Him, relate to Him, befriend Him. Yes, dear neighbors and strangers of our fair universe, it is certainly with great pride that we present to you that blossoming ward of the fair planet Earth: Man!"



"Ready! By gum, yes, I'm ready!" Collective Man said. "Hello out there, and tell me—is this the face of the pie-in-the-sky dreamer? Do I have the look of a terror-filled child afraid of tentacles, claws, and fangs? Why, even if your intelligence boggles my own, I'm ready!"

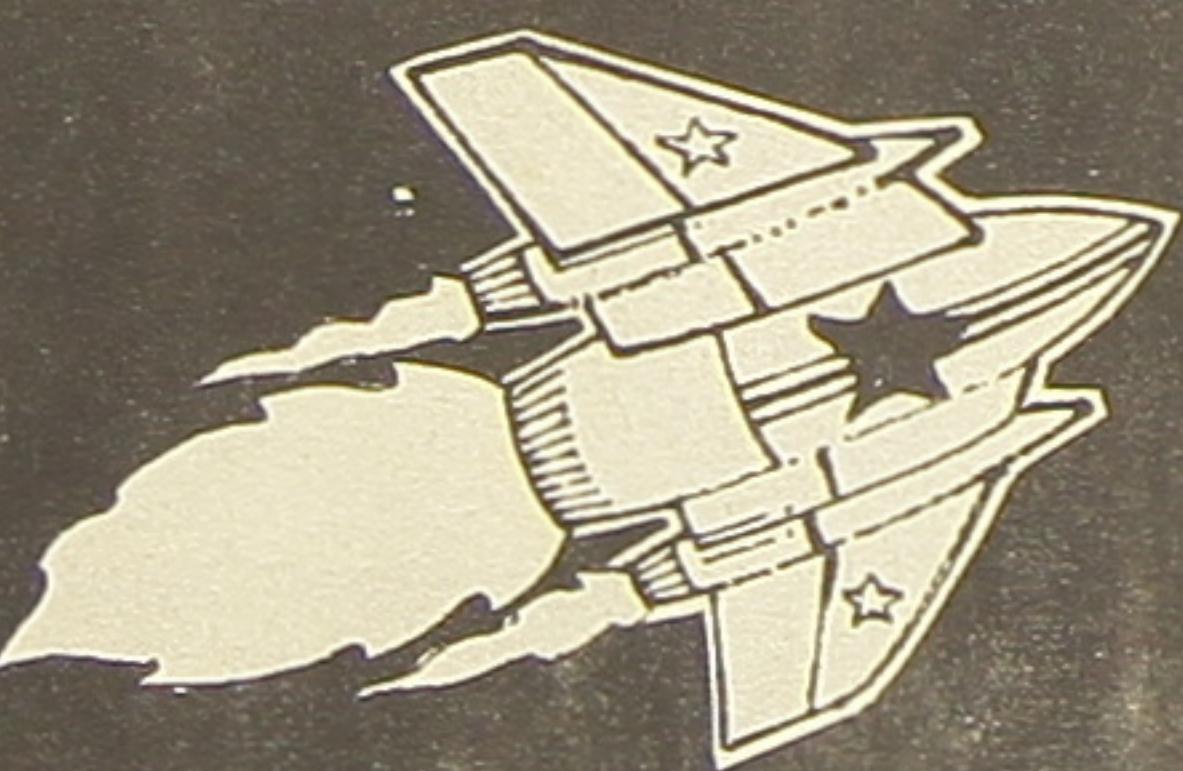
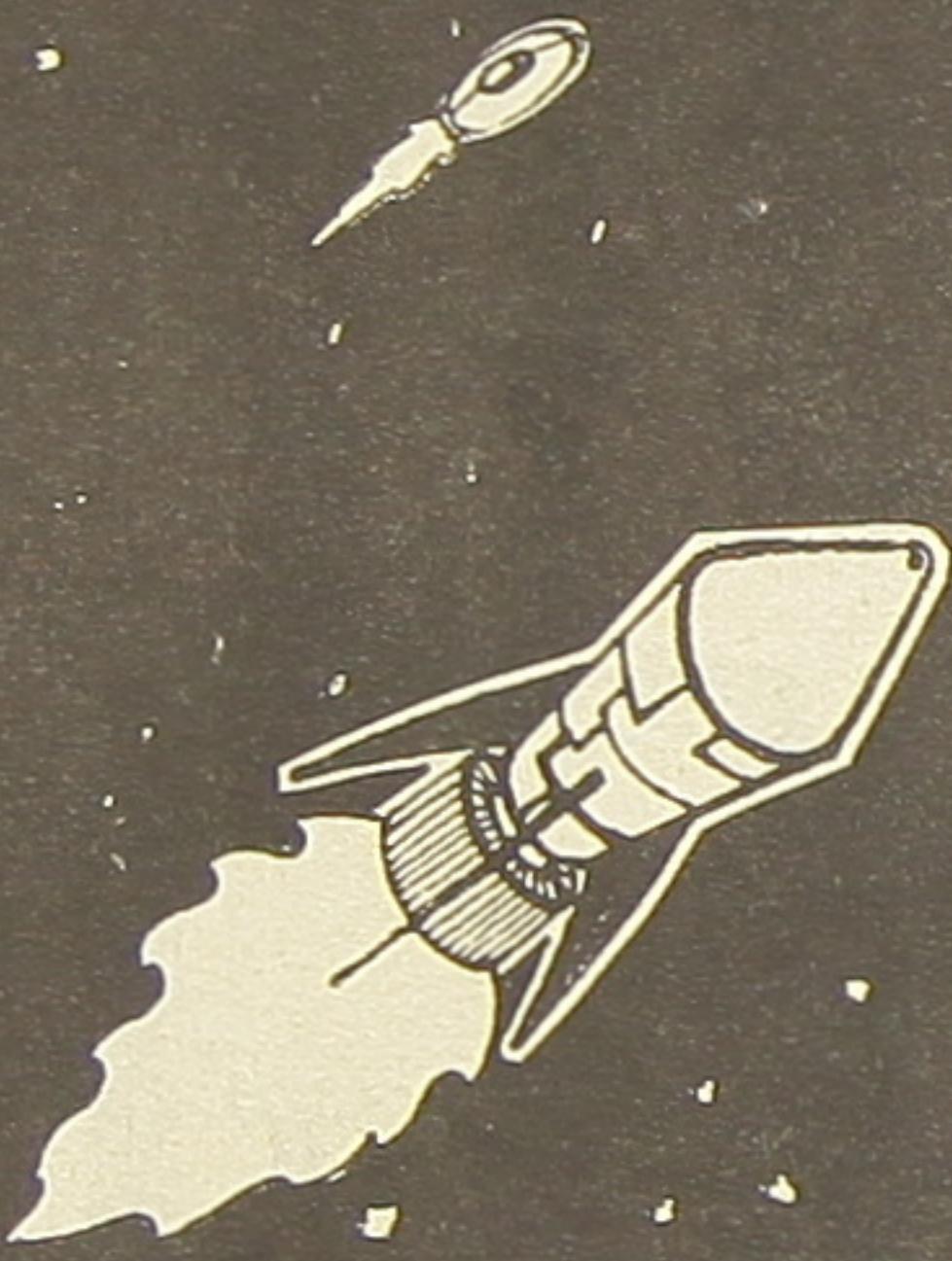
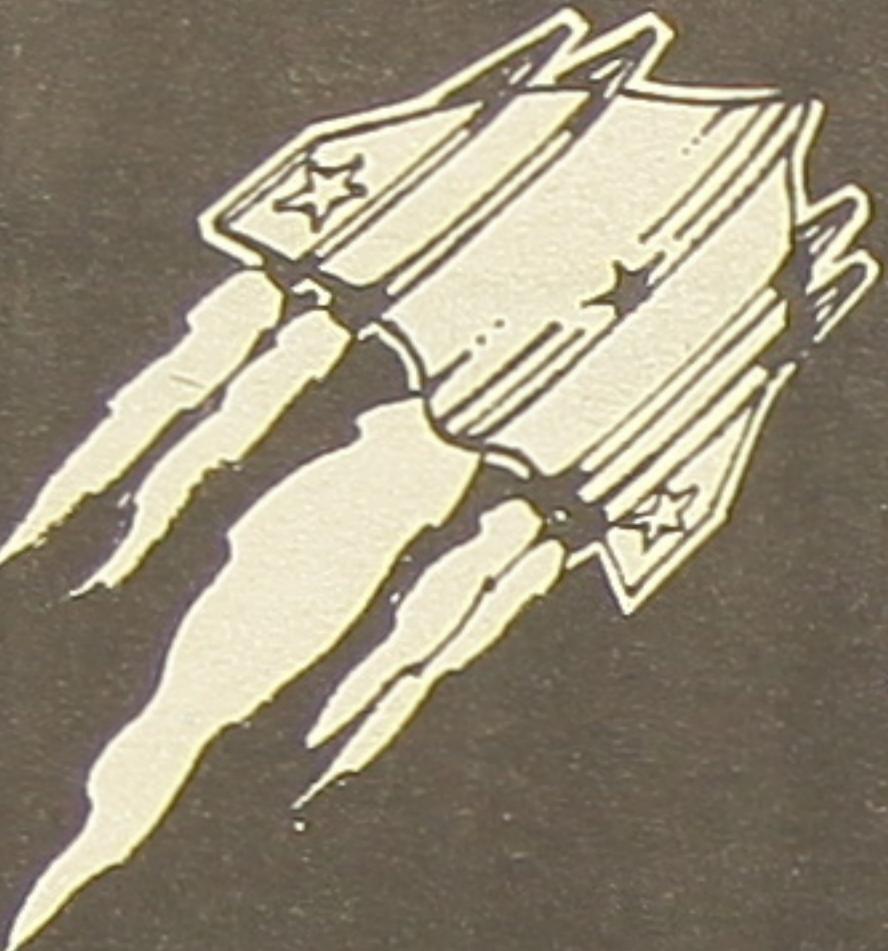
"I've waited and learned and thought and matured. I'm coming, you-out-there! Yes, I know you're there, and I say it's time we met. I thought for a time you'd come to me first, that I'd awaken one morning to a distant planet's foster-son calling me out to play. But it's fallen to me to roam the black playground first. I'll build the first galactic clubhouse and be the charter member of the Universal Intelligent Life Mutual Aid Society. I'm on my way out—on my way out to find you."

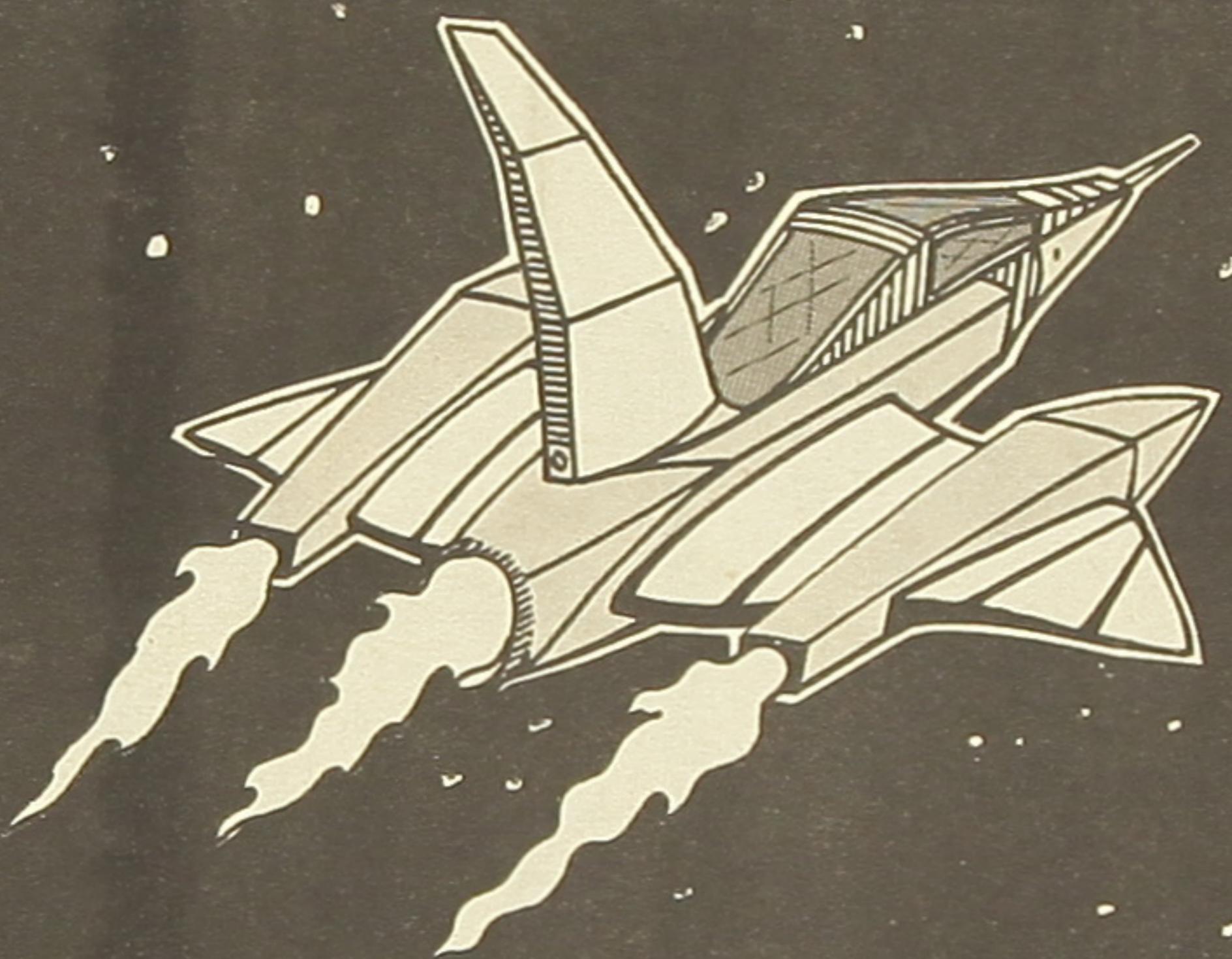
So, Man laid His plans, dreamed His dreams, imagined that first handshake with the one-out-there, and He smiled with pride. Pride was the engine, anticipation the fuel, and desire for companionship sparked the machine to life. This motivation and years of work turned the skeletons of poverty, disease, and war into dust on Man's closet floor. Then, one hopeful morning, Man went up, up, and away.

He was careful about His work. He flew and landed and signalled and charted and mapped. It was just a matter of time. He knew the dogma; He'd written it Himself:

"...among the uncountable stars, odds say that nature will find a way to nurture intelligence on another planet. . ."

He comforted Himself with this creed and kept heartily about His work. He lost track of the years as He wound His way through the cold maze of space. He depended on odds as He carried out His mission. He had faith in Himself and in the possibilities.





And, of course, the search did end with a discovery. Man learned the truth about odds. He scoured all of space to find out that odds are only that: possibilities. When He ran out of stars and planets and possibilities, He paused. He looked bewildered for just a moment and then a quick chill climbed his spine.

"I have knowledge and power and intelligence and personality and the whole place to myself."

With a nervous look over His shoulder, Man hurried home.

"Hello out there! Anybody home?" Man said. His collective voice whispered His greeting to the moon, sang it to Mars, yelled it across the black gap to the neighboring planets, and, with a mighty amplified push, screamed it to the stars.

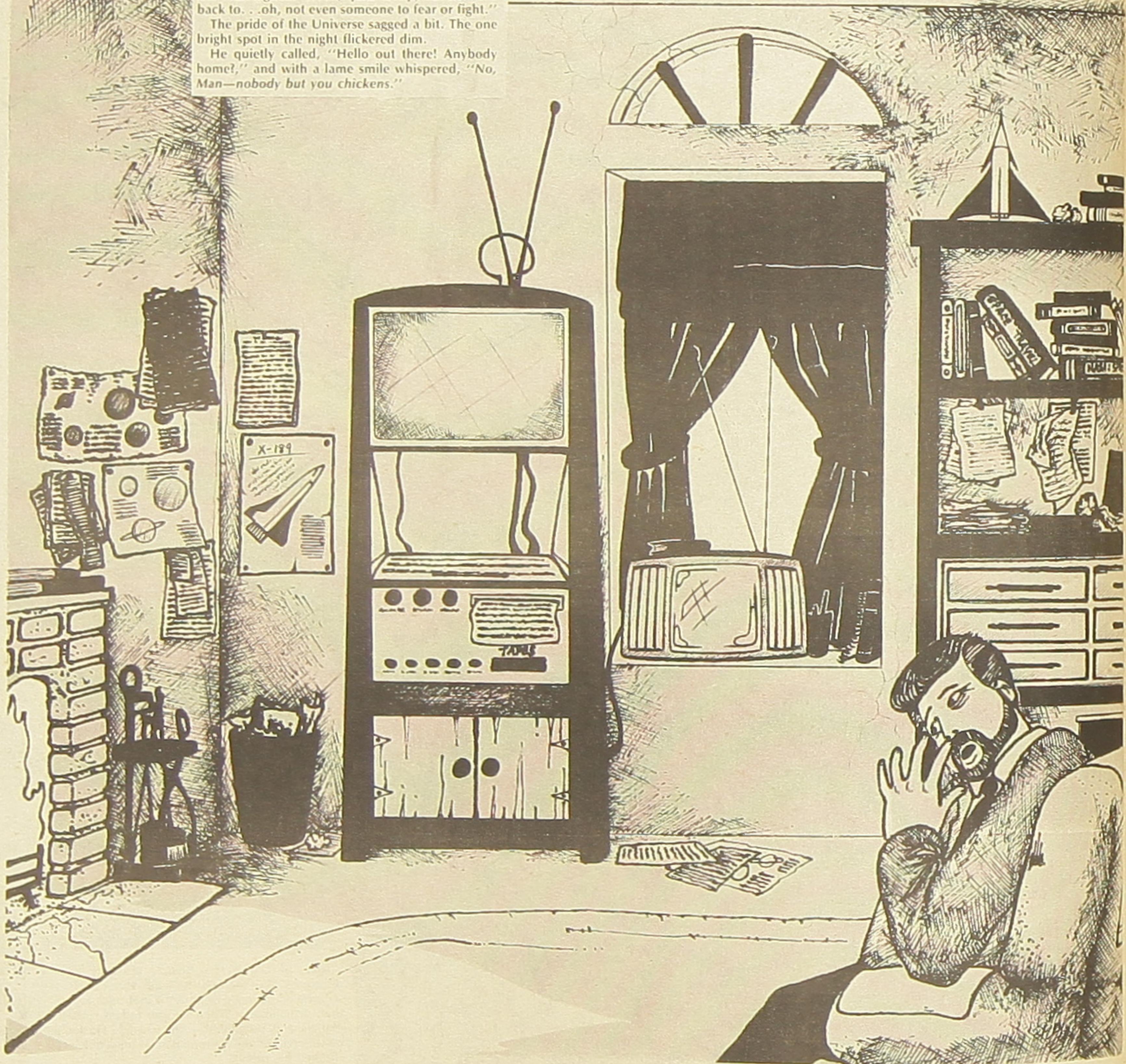
"Hello out there! Anybody home?" Man shouted. No echo. No answer. No busy signal. Silence. . .

With eyes squeezed shut, He forced a shudder past. A raspy cough was a sign of the room's damp air.

"All dressed up and no one to show, eh?" collective Man sighed. "Well, quite a trip, but now it's back to...oh, not even someone to fear or fight."

The pride of the Universe sagged a bit. The one bright spot in the night flickered dim.

He quietly called, "Hello out there! Anybody home?" and with a lame smile whispered, "No, Man—nobody but you chickens."



Tim Stark

Story

John Phillips

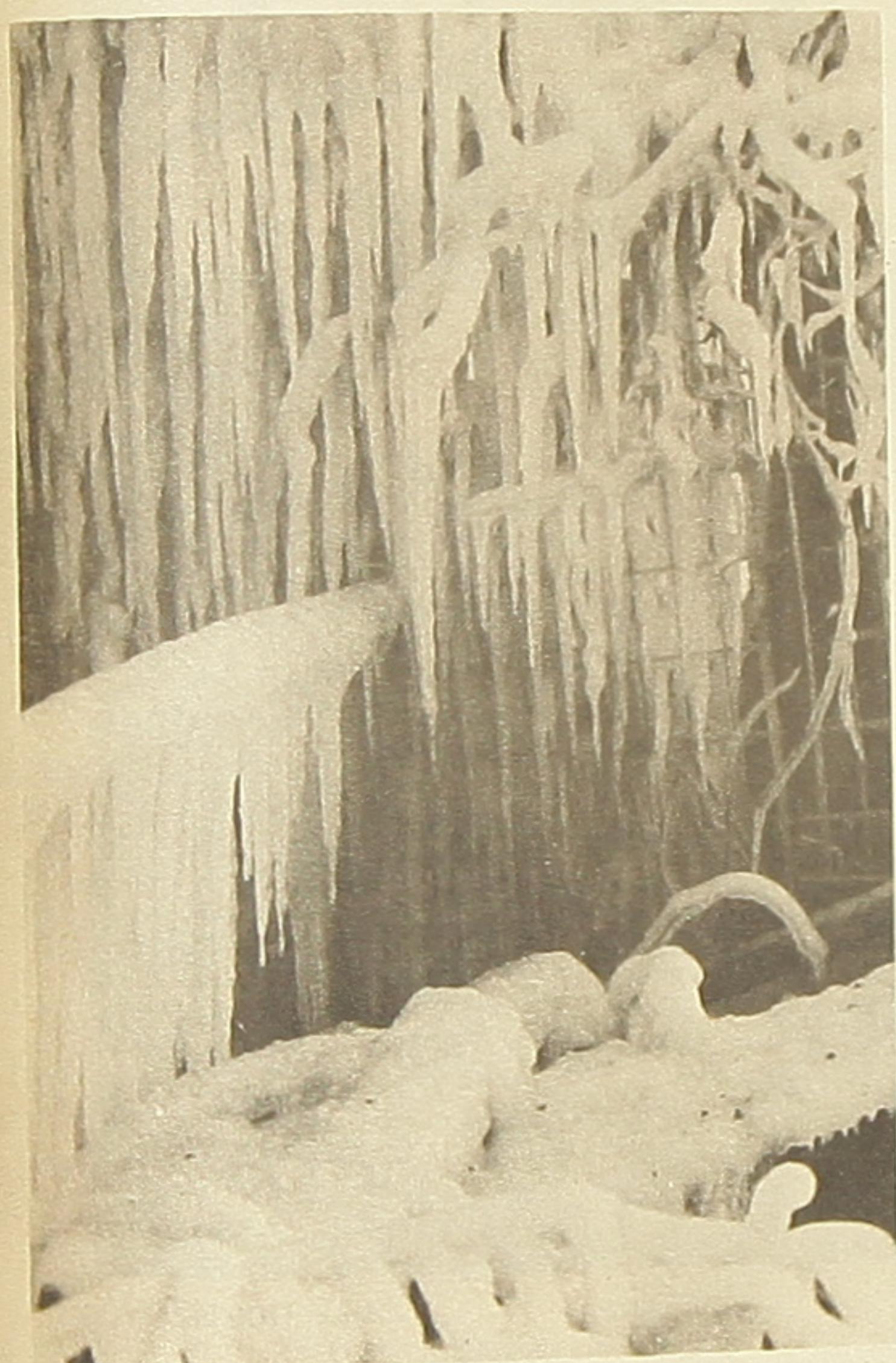
Inks and Finished Art

Simon McCaffery

Layout and Design



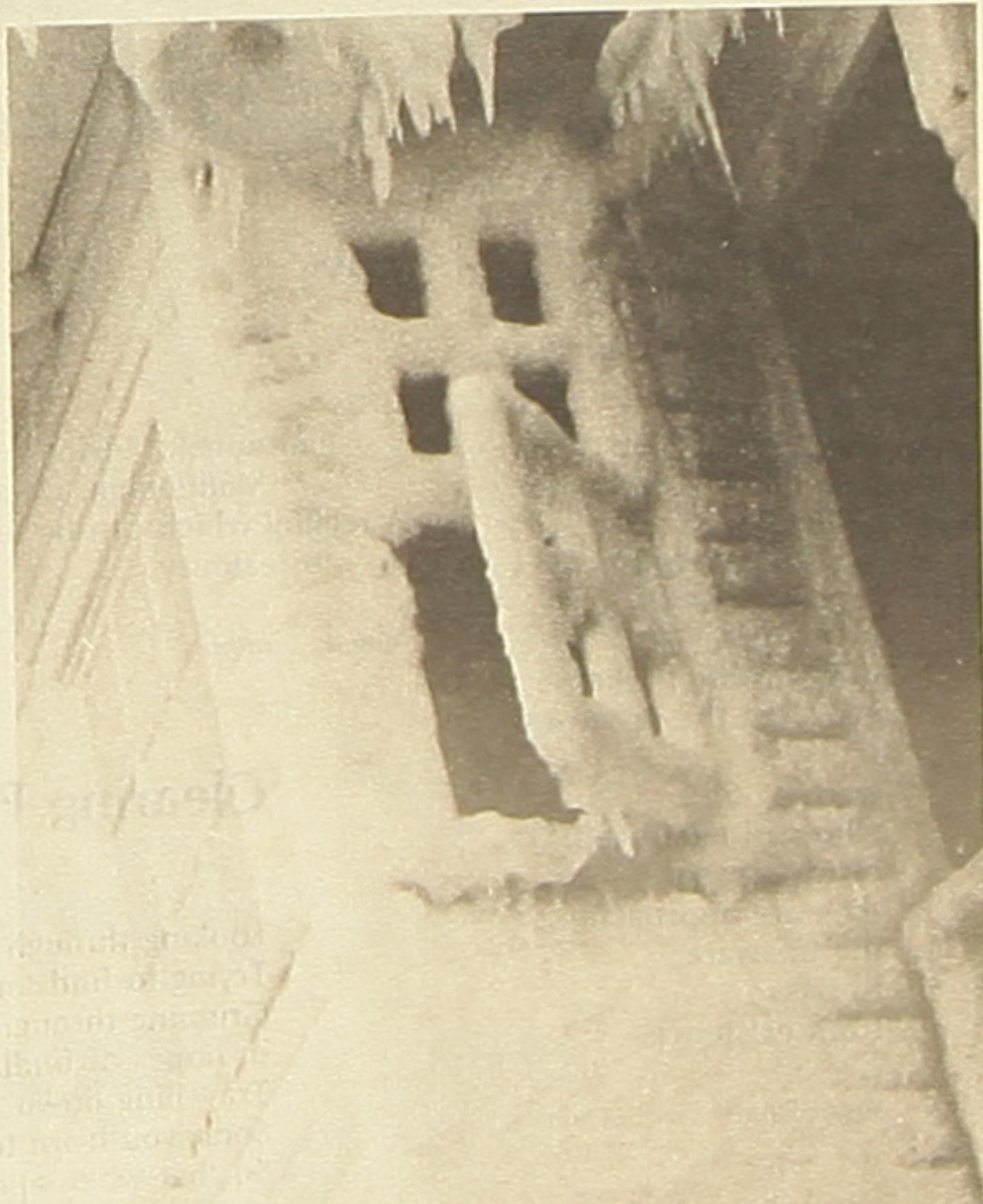
Gallery:
JoAnn Hollis



Winter's Silence

The tree stood bare
in the muted colors of dusk.
A solitary statue silhouetted
against the gray skyline.
Underneath,
the cold, blue hill rolled downward,
Spilling into the icy waters
of the stagnant lake.

JoAnn Hollis





Mike Hines

Love

The Owl

the round yellow eyes
patiently blinking
rotating
like the beacon
in a lighthouse
looking out
through the darkness
guarding the premises

warning all
who will take heed
of the danger
they are approaching
the unaware
to pass
from existence

Susan Stone

Love,

Emotional, Moving,
Maddening, Uncomprehendable, and Painful.
A feeling which can be turned around in a second,
To Jealousy.

Melody Cundiff

Clearing Paths

Looking through another's eyes
Trying to find tomorrow.
Grinning through another's smile
in hopes of finding sorrow.
Travelling down another's path.
Soon you learn to clear your own
So that when another's not about
you can make it all alone.

Curtis Steere

The Turtle

like an elderly man
unable to cope
with his surroundings
sucking in
with a vacuum hiss
sealing out
everything
attempting
to turn to stone

Susan Stone

Chafed Chaff Blown Down

Chafed chaff blown down.

Chafed and sore
I'm jumpy and tense
The friends I ignore
Watch from over my fence

Chaff and weeds
Things I admire
All are useless deeds
Gathered for 'morrow's fire

Blown far away
My priorities shrink
How many more days
of "just stopping to think"

Down, almost out
I sink deep inside
I try to reach out
While running to hide

Chafed chaff blown down.

Tim Stark

Great Frontier

You were blessed with a talent,
Few others ever possess.
Desires to reach for the unknown,
To develop the future.

We never realize what we take for granted,
How life is as fragile as a butterflies wings,
And now you've been called home.

We did not know you in mortal body,
But your fantastic imagination
Shall be an inspiration for all,
And you shall communicate with us through your memory.

Melody Cundiff

The Lion

the massive mane
crowning his head with glory
framing the snub profile
with preeminence

jeweled eyes
peering down on his subjects
studying the waiting court
with sovereign boredom

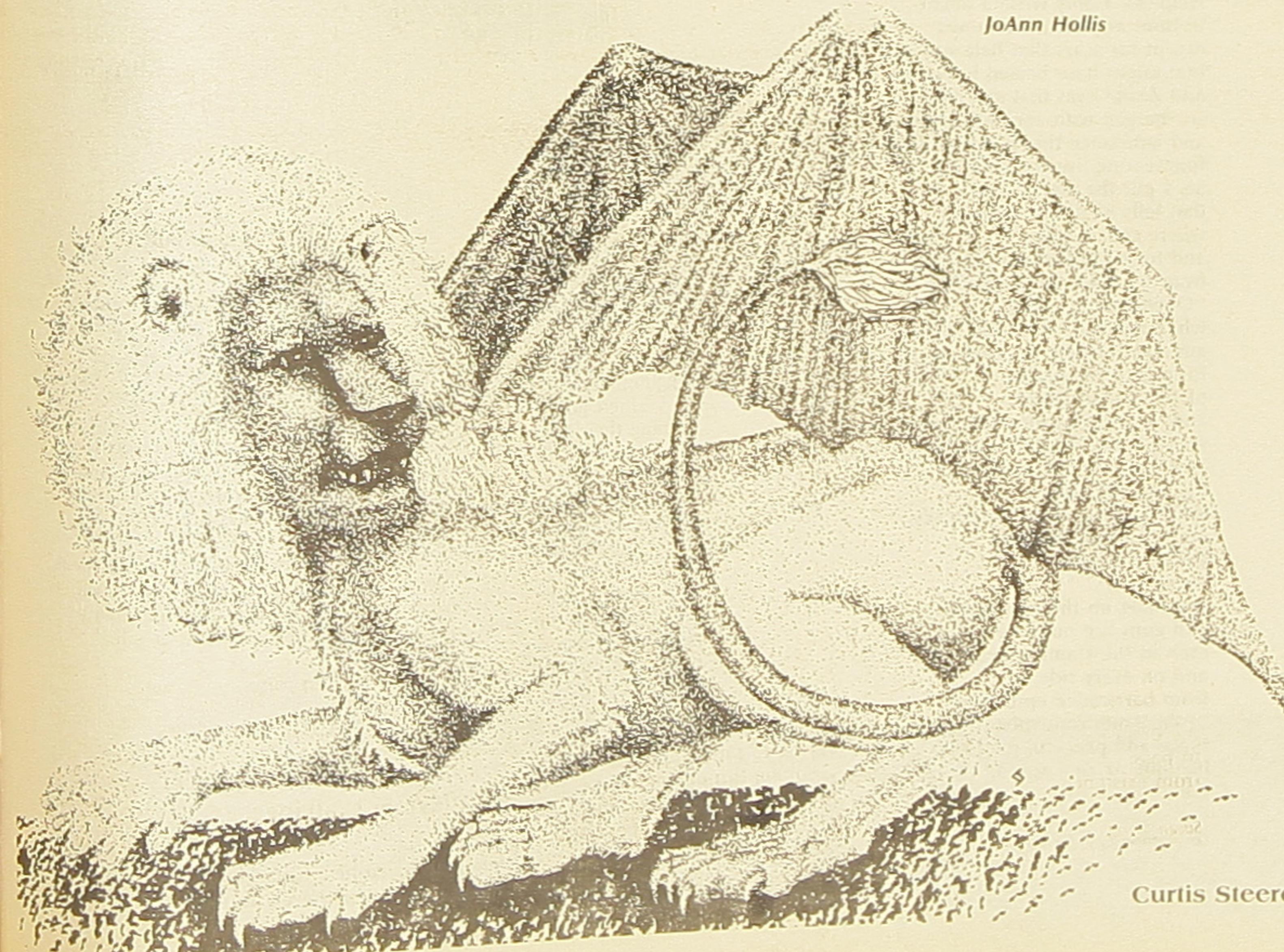
suppressing the awaited roar
the king of beasts
silencing his onlookers with suspense
ruling his kingdom
from within the bars

Susan Stone

Soil of Sin

I am a cloud,
seeded by the soil of sin,
slowly building
'til I can hold no more.
Bursting forth
my tears tumble down,
washing free the filth of man.

JoAnn Hollis



Curtis Steere

Doctors Targeted (Today's item)

To R.M.

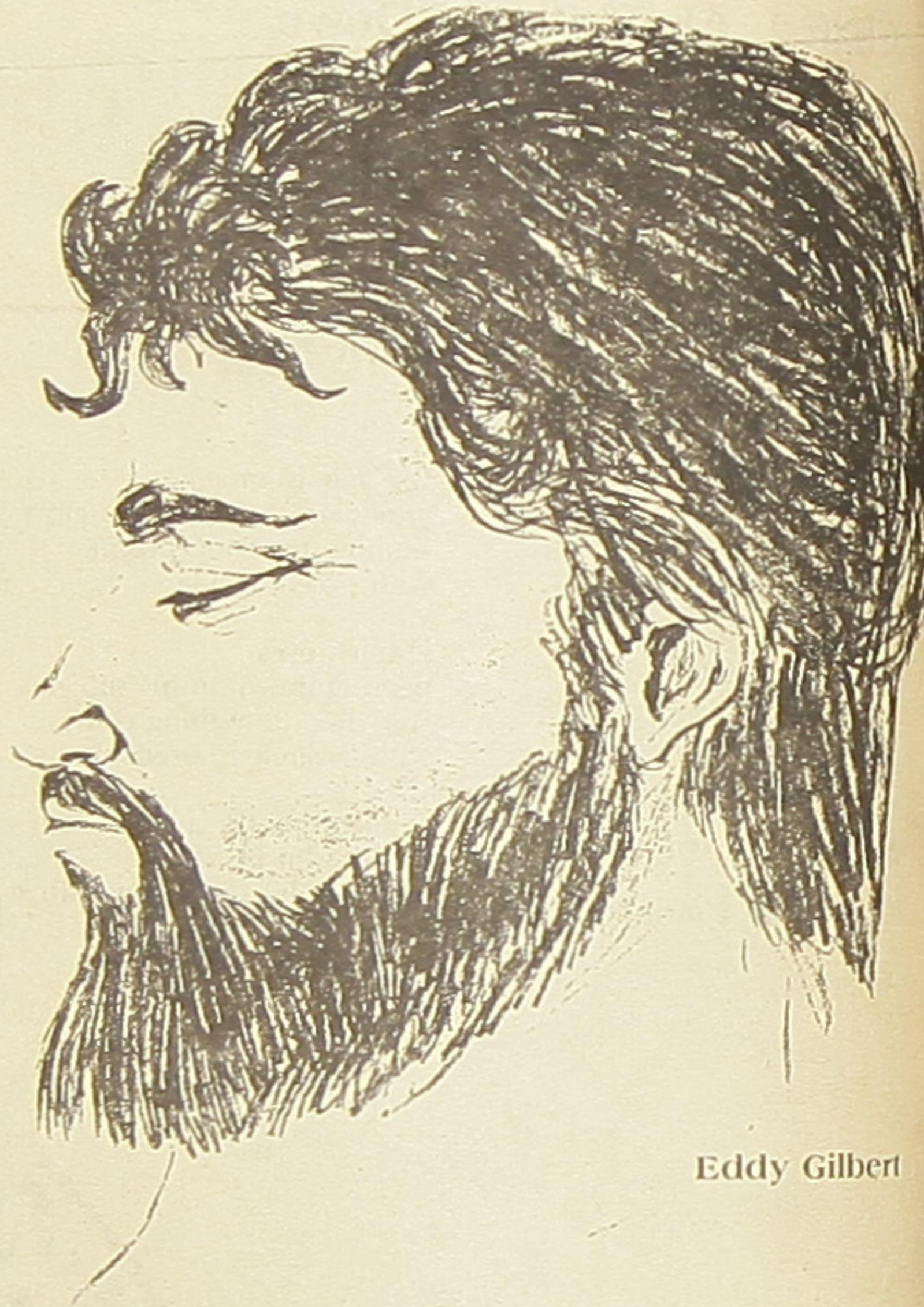
Zahi Hawa, humane M.D.,
servant of the poor, is gone,
shot to death by terrorists,
in Beirut, Lebanon,
a warm, intelligent, friend to man
gifted with a healer's hand,
Whose total epitaph for me,
in journalistic brevity
betrays the cynic's hour:

"Zahi Hawa's work is done;
He was shot today in Lebanon,
Poor doctor Zahi Hawa."

But the rage I feel about this news
ignites the long, deep, buried fuse
of fury worse than war or hell,
unknown to fiend or infidel,
the pain of being free and well
while doctor Hawa, still ignored,
lies bleeding on his clinic floor,
his body, heart and noble mind,
spent in caring for his kind,
pay this year's usual fee,
paid in full with life,
where life is still a luxury
for men like Zahi Hawa.

Helpless, I only write a poem
to hunt an enemy unknown
except for scars that hate has cut,
that might have healed in Nazareth,
and Zealot eyes that can not rest
so charged with ancient prejudice,
and ignorance that howls and lies
forswearing lives to suicide.
So, I put the paper down
that tells of far-off Lebanon
where cedars grow,
and towering Christian crosses rise;
from minarets the muezzins cry:
"Obedience to Allah,"
while stunned and naked children scream
and aged, fallen, doorway beams
form picture puzzles
of the Star of David,
and, near the storied Mediterranean,
young bands of Shiite Muslims run,
and Maronite militiamen,
the sun still high,
look, restless, at the Syrian sky,
and search out snipers
where yesterday
tourists lay
dreaming on the holy sands,
and guns are popping
even in the Hamra now,
and on every side,
from barricaded embassies
to the American University,
brave and peaceful people,
like doctor Zahi Hawa,
die.

Dr. Vernon L. Peterson



Eddy Gilbert

The Non-Existant Rule

We feel like we're about to conquer
life and death and war
but once again
a man will close
a non-existent door.

While we wait for war to come
we fight like stubborn mules
we aggravate and violate
the non-existent rules

The non-existent rule I speak
is that which is God's will;
He gave it to us on Siani:
"Thou shalt never kill."

Jon Jonz

The Fishbowl

wiggling in
their gowns of gold
fanning their tails
of fine chiffon
puckering up
their pouting lips
circling around
the flowing fronds

clearing the stage
of gathering green
sluggishly sweeping
before the cast
his spiral shell
dull with moss
easing up
the side of glass

Susan Stone

While Walking

While walking alone I began to hear
Following footsteps I grew to fear.

Lori Mitchell